

EAST MOUNTAIN AREA PLAN 2005

DRAFT

BERNALILLO COUNTY, ADOPTED _____

EAST MOUNTAIN AREA PLAN 2005



Zoning, Building, Planning, and Environmental Health Department
Bernalillo County
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Overview

The East Mountain Area is a beautiful and serene place where residents value the rural quality of life.

The East Mountain Area encompasses approximately 210,000 acres of eastern Bernalillo County. The area contains the entire portion of the County east of the Sandia and Manzanita Mountains. The area has developed around the Sandia, Manzanita, and Manzano mountain ranges, owned and managed by the National Forest Service. The mountains provide the area with scenic beauty, wildlife habitat areas, and diverse recreational opportunities. These characteristics along with quietness, low-population density, limited vehicle traffic, and neighborhood-scale businesses define the rural character of the area.

From Vision to Policy

In a rural area, a healthy, natural ecosystem dominates the landscape, and development is limited and not easily seen from most roadways. Home sites are most often purchased and built individually by various local builders rather than mass-produced in tract developments built by a single enterprise.

LAND USE

The rural character of the East Mountain Area is very important to its residents. The East Mountain Area community acknowledges and is concerned that the existence of the area's rural character is vulnerable to change. The type and intensity of development impacts this character.

Goals Overview:

- Promote appropriate development patterns

- Protect property rights and the health, safety, and welfare of all
- Keep a network of publicly accessible facilities, parks, trails and open spaces

Recommendation:

- Development/subdivision review process should take into account all the elements of the rural character, a few of which are water availability, wildlife, visual resources, and infrastructure.
- Establishment of sector plans would provide specific zoning requirements for designated areas.

Policies Overview:

- Guide subdivision, development, and land uses in accordance to physical suitability of the land, existing development patterns, the capacity of established and planned public facilities, and projected housing demand in order to prevent environmental degradation and keep to the two-acre net lot size per single-family dwelling unit.
- Require Light crop production, home gardening, sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry, and commercial activities to be of an appropriate scale to meet the needs of the area residents and located where they do not conflict with other resources and where they are consistent with environmental conditions.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Issues of great importance to the East Mountain Area are water availability, fire danger, wildlife permanence, visual resources, and clean air.

Goals Overview:

- Protect water quality and quantity, maintain wildlife habitats, control erosion, reduce air pollution, and conserve the viewshed.

Recommendation:

- Restrict or severely limit development that does not prove to have an adequate water supply, that creates pollution, and that destroys native vegetation and habitats.

Policies Overview:

- Require development proposals shall indicate environmentally sensitive factors
- Encourage protection of soils and native vegetation and re-vegetation using native plants and materials that blend with the natural setting
- Prepare and/or update ordinances governing the approval and construction of community water and wastewater systems to be in compliance with the East Mountain Area Plan and other applicable County plans.
- Prepare and/or update design, construction standards and procedures, process for the review and approval for community water and wastewater systems, effluent quality and monitoring for community wastewater systems, and individual water wells.
- Require all new subdivisions to study the effects of the development upon the groundwater supply over a 100-year period (prepared by a Hydrogeologist or Groundwater Hydrologist).
- Provide the public with educational information about conventional and alternative water and wastewater systems.
- Require developers for all new developments of 25 dwelling units or more, to provide a connection to a regulated sewer system; centralized collection and treatment of wastewater (including nitrogen removal); approved alternative on-site non-discharging systems; or
- Conventional systems that meet the requirements specified in the Bernalillo County Liquid Waste Ordinance; *and* an acceptable hydrogeologic report.
- Prepare a water and liquid waste infrastructure study and develop a wastewater services options analysis for the East Mountain Area.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

East Mountain Area residents and visitors have varying degrees of needs for infrastructure, facilities, and amenities.

Goals Overview:

- Provide housing and job opportunities, educational and recreational facilities, amenities and infrastructure

Recommendation:

- Initiate economic development planning to examine appropriate locations and opportunities for business and industry.
- Ensure that the local and regional road circulation network is providing access to all residential and recreation areas in the East Mountain Area.

Policies Overview:

- Prepare an economic development plan
- Make accessible and available to area residents, public parks, trails, educational facilities, other amenities, and related programs.
- Require all new proposed developments to indicate the level of need for Public Safety facilities and include a fire mitigation plan.
- Bernalillo County Public works Department shall pursue methods to gravel and maintain all appropriate high traffic roadways in the East Mountain Area to reduce dust and air pollution.
- Improved and maintained the primary intra-mountain circulation network to provide safe, efficient year-round access.
- Maintain secondary circulation routes as rural roadways providing alternative north-south connections from I-40 to the residential development to the north.

In summary, the intention of this plan is to present the vision for the East Mountain Area, provide planning guidelines, and outline public and private actions

Section

2

Introduction

A plan, much like a community, is made by bringing together diverse levels of thoughts and actions.

Land Use Plans guide the development of a particular area. Plans generally include: (1) the assessment of an area's resources and the needs of its population, (2) formation of goals and policies addressing these goals, and (3) a timeframe or schedule for implementation. The process of creating a Land Use Plan brings together the area's governmental entities and local community members who work together to help guide the community into the future. The process allows those involved to visualize potential changes and analyze the associated impacts. Together, the government and the community can work to anticipate or avoid future problems.

In 1988 the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan) was drafted to guide land use for the entire Bernalillo County. Since the initial publication, subsequent updates have been published. The last update came out in 2002. The Comprehensive Plan maps the areas suitable for development at various levels of rural and urban services for the entire Bernalillo County. Six development density categories and a set of Urban Centers policies are adopted as a guide for zoning, utility and public services planning, and for subsequent area sector plans. Each category has distinct allowances and restrictions on development. The rural category has severe soil or water limitations, or has agricultural or recreational potential important enough to significantly limit developments to an overall density of one unit per two acres in the East Mountain Area.

While a plan contains general policies, in itself cannot be used for enforcement. Ordinances are established to carry out the policies from these plans. The legal nature of planning requires that all plans must be compatible with other plans for the same area. The Comprehensive Plan refers to area and facility plans, such as the East Mountain Area Plan, for greater detail. In turn, these plans refer to sector development, neighborhood and corridor plans for even more detail. The Bernalillo County Parks and Recreation department has prepared the *Bernalillo County Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan* and the *East Mountain Bikeways and Trails Plan* that outline specific actions for the East Mountain Area.

Planning Concepts For Rural Areas

Generally, planning involves the analysis of physical, economic, and social/psychological elements that impact a specified geographical area. At the beginning of the planning process, planners and residents identify a wide variety of factors such as the identity of an area; natural resources; land use designations and property ownership; development densities; community amenities and infrastructure standards. Then they undertake more detailed research of some of the following issues:

- What constitutes rural character?
- How do Comprehensive Plan policies affect the area?
- How does the rate of population growth affect the area?
- What other plans or studies affect the area?
- How much does water availability affect land use activities?
- What are the historic and archeological properties existing in the area?
- What role do rural lands play in natural resource use or production in the county?
- What rural economic development opportunities exist?

Further along in the process, the planning group formulates goals from this analysis and finally, establishes measures by which to achieve these goals.

From the residents' point of view, planning is driven by a vision of what they want their community to be, and to some extent, what they do not want it to be. During the 1992 East Mountain Area Plan process, a formal visioning session took place. The information that resulted was incorporated into that plan and remains in the updated plan. Additionally, the voice of the community has reaffirmed the desire to maintain the rural character of the area. In the Community Voices section of this plan, residents confirm the value of living in a rural area, what they want to keep about it, the role of natural resources, existence of significant sites/special places, and establishment of appropriate development.

From the governmental entity's position, planning is driven by the need to provide opportunities for housing and employment and related amenities for the entire jurisdiction's population while ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all.

The creation of an area plan is a collaboration of the wants and requirements of both the residents and the governmental entity. Rural area planning involves a great degree of sensitivity to natural resources. Rural area land use decisions that impact natural resources are more immediately felt by its inhabitants. This was apparent in the EMA residents' current recommendations on goals and policies, which were subsequently incorporated into this EMAP's goals and policies.

Purpose Of EMAP

ORIGINAL PLAN

The East Mountain Area encompasses approximately 210,000 acres (321 square miles) of eastern Bernalillo County. The area contains all of the County east of the Sandia and Manzanita Mountains. The study area is bisected by two perpendicular routes, I-40 extending east-west across the area, providing the primary connection from the East Mountain Area to the City of Albuquerque through Tijeras Canyon, and the area's major north-south roadway, State Highway 14 north of I-40 and State Highway 337 (formerly South 14) south of I-40.

The area has developed around the Sandia, Manzanita, and Manzano mountain ranges, owned and managed by the National Forest Service. The mountains provide the area with scenic beauty, wildlife habitat areas, and diverse recreational opportunities.

The purpose of the original plan was to establish guidelines by which to carry out the land use goals for the East Mountain Area. The plan presents the existing physical and environmental conditions; historical and projected population trends; and industrial, commercial, and residential development trends. The historical and existing conditions for the area provide a framework for the plan's evaluation of existing County policies and regulations relative to the community's goals and vision. The East Mountain Area Plan is developed as a statement of policy that will encourage involvement from Bernalillo County elected officials. The plan provides guidance to the Bernalillo County Commission and County Planning Commission decisions regarding land use controls and development decisions in the East Mountain Area. The plan also recommends policies and specific actions that should be pursued by the County in order to implement the desired policies. The area contains sub-areas that have distinct and different characteristics from one another.

The entire study area was included for data collection and analysis purposes. However, based upon these data and analyses, it is recognized that those areas west of the crest of the Sandia Mountains and north of I-40, including Sandia Heights, are excluded from all implementation recommendations and policies contained in this plan. The areas west of the crest are included in, and relate to, planning efforts existing and under consideration for the foothills adjacent to the City of Albuquerque. Carnuel and Chilili are included in the planning area and all implementation recommendations and policies do [not] apply to these areas. In addition, the Isleta Indian Reservation has been included in this plan's boundaries, but the policies of this plan do not apply there. All policies proposed in this plan do apply to all other areas east of the Sandia Crest, Manzanita Mountains and Manzano Mountains within Bernalillo County.

PLAN UPDATE and ORGANIZATION

The plan contained herein is a revision of the East Mountain Area Plan originally adopted by the Bernalillo County Commission on May 6, 1975 and amended June 19, 1979. It was updated again in 1992. The 1992 Plan established a vision for the future with the help of a resident

survey and outlined a course of action to achieve that vision. This document serves as an update to the 1992 East Mountain Area Plan. This updated plan also incorporates the current physical, social, and environmental factors of the East Mountain Area as well as a community survey to produce goals.

In this updated version, the community has identified the following issues that have become more critical since the last plan.

- Rural Character – defining, maintaining the integrity of the natural resources
- Water Availability – increased number of large subdivisions
- Residential/Commercial Development – number and size of residences and businesses, land use changes

These issues are incorporated in this 2005 Plan. Section I contains a summary of the Plan and process. Section II is an introduction to the purpose of planning and presents the Goals as updated and revised for the East Mountain Area. Section III provides history and current data on the area. Equally significant is the Community Vision subsection that contains the vision and main goals created by the community. Finally, Section IV provides policies.

Updated maps and tables are made possible by the improved technology and accessibility to digital data. The discrepancy in numbers between land use tables is due to the reliance on two different sources, the Bernalillo County Assessor's office differs from the City of Albuquerque Geographic Information System (GIS). The City GIS enters information into its system based on each lot of record belonging to any given owner. Whereas, the County Assessor's office collects information based on property ownership. Conceivably, one property could contain more than one lot.

General Goals

The following information summarizes the foundation for the Area Plan:

- The rural character of the area is defined by open spaces, natural ecosystems, beautiful views, quietness, low-population density, limited vehicle traffic, neighborhood-scale businesses.
- Development and growth is inevitable and must be accommodated in a way that is not destructive to the area's character and environment.
- Natural resources are the area's most important assets and as such should be protected.

LAND USE	<p>Promote development that retains the unique character of the East Mountain Area.</p> <p>Protect the property rights of property owners while ensuring health, safety and welfare of all inhabitants.</p>
Open Space	<p>Establish and maintain a network of educational and recreational facilities, parks, trails and open spaces that promote recreation, tourism, cultural activities, trail corridors, protection from natural and manmade hazards, and conservation of natural and visual resources.</p> <p>Secure long term funding (20 years) source for Bernalillo County Open Space (BCOS).</p> <p>Develop a pro-active acquisition strategy that promotes the mission of BCOS.</p> <p>Consider alternative methods of land preservation (in addition to fee simple purchase) such as conservation easements, land in-lieu-of Impact Fees, and trades.</p> <p>Develop management plans for BCOS properties that conserve and enhance natural and cultural resources while providing opportunities for public education and recreation.</p> <p>Preserve and enhance water resources on BCOS properties.</p> <p>Develop best management practices (BMPs) for all BCOS properties.</p> <p>Form partnerships with agencies and community organizations to build BCOS capacity for land management.</p>

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Promote preservation of the natural environment to maintain rural character, protect the watershed, control erosion, facilitate drainage, reduce air pollution, and conserve the viewshed.
Wildlife	Strive to maintain wildlife habitats and create new habitats where wildlife would otherwise be displaced.
Water	Maintain a dependable, quality water supply for the area.
Wastewater	Require the use of appropriate technologies for on-site liquid waste processing for private and community systems where feasible.
Soils and Vegetation	Protect slopes and native vegetation and encourage re-vegetation (on sites that are disturbed by development).
Air, Light, Noise Pollution	Safeguard public health and enhance the quality of life by enforcing Lighting, Noise, and Air Pollution ordinances.
	Improve air quality to safeguard public health and enhance the quality of life
	Prevent new land use/noise conflicts to protect the public health and welfare, and enhance the quality of life by. Maintain and improve the existing visual quality of the East Mountain Area.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	
Residential Development	Maintain the supply of affordable housing in the East Mountain Area.
Economic and Commercial Development	Achieve steady and diversified economic development balanced with other important social, cultural, and environmental goals.
Education	Provide a wide variety of educational and recreational opportunities.
Facilities	Develop and manage public services and facilities in an efficient, equitable manner.
Bernalillo County Parks and Recreation	Provide and promote diversified and quality recreational programs and facilities for the citizens of Bernalillo County. (1995)
<i>Relevant goals from the Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan.</i>	<p>Promote and enhance a cooperative working relationship with staff from other federal, state, county and municipal agencies and private developers on facility development and management issues. (1995)</p> <p>Emphasize conservation of water resources.</p> <p>Emphasize maintenance of and improvements at existing facilities.</p> <p>Pursue diverse funding sources, joint purchases and revenue generating activities.</p> <p>Ensure that designs of new facilities or upgrades to existing facilities are innovative, water conscious, easy to maintain, and respond to user needs and demands</p> <p>Establish and maintain additional as well as existing neighborhood parks, hardscape areas and other recreational facilities, which will meet a variety of community needs.</p>

<p>Bernalillo County Trails</p> <p><i>Relevant goals from the EM Bikeways and Trails Plan.</i></p>	<p>Identify, develop and maintain a series of interconnecting trails in East Mountain Area providing recreation for bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and other non-motorized users.</p> <p>Provide appropriate locations for use by motorized users</p> <p>Initiate, complete and begin implementing East Mountain Trail Plan.</p>
<p>Cultural Resources</p>	<p>Identify and, if appropriate and feasible, manage or acquire significant archeological and paleontological sites for research, education, economic, or recreational use.</p>
<p>Transportation</p>	<p>Plan transportation infrastructure to facilitate a balanced circulation/transportation system including automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian, and public transportation that respects the existing rural characteristics of the East Mountain Area.</p>
<p>Public Safety</p>	<p>Improve safeguard measures for fire protection, law enforcement, and emergency evacuation.</p>
<p>Solid Waste</p>	<p>Maintain an accessible solid waste station and make available a recycling program.</p>